

Message Text

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13-11

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAJ-01 AID-05 /068 W

----- 123245

O P 160530Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2252

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY

CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP PGOV PFOR MY US

SUBJ: DEATH OF PRIME MINISTER RAZAK: LOCAL ATMOSPHERICS

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 0281 (DTG 150520Z JAN 76)

1. SUMMARY: LATE PM RAZAK'S BODY ARRIVED HOME TO POIGNANT AND MOVING AIRPORT RECEPTION. FUNERAL CEREMONIES SET FOR EARLY AFTERNOON JAN 16. U.S. CONDOLENCE MESSAGES FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN LOCAL PRESS. ACCORDING ONE REPORT CARRIED VIA OFFICIAL MALAYSIAN NEWS SERVICE, RAZAK HAD KEPT SECRET FOR SIX YEARS FACT HE HAD SUFFERED FROM LEUKEMIA. DOMESTIC POLITICAL POT LIKELY TO BUBBLE AS UMNO POLITICIANS JOCKEY FOR POSITION, ESPECIALLY IN CONTEXT CHOOSING INDIVIDUAL TO
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FILL POSITION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. END SUMMARY.

2. LATE PRIME MINISTER TUN ABDUL RAZAK'S BODY ARRIVED KUALA LUMPUR VIA A SPECIAL MAS FLIGHT FROM LONDON 1730 HOURS JAN 15. MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE JAMMED INTO AIRPORT AND ITS ENVIRONS AND LINED MAIN ROAD LEADING FROM AIRPORT INTO CITY. AIRPORT SCENE WAS EXTREMELY MOVING AND POIGNANT AND VERY MALAY, REMINISCENT OF FINAL RETURN OF VILLAGE BOY TO HIS HOME (IN FACT, MANY RESIDENTS OF TWO VILLAGES IN PAHANG WHERE RAZAK WAS BORN AND SPENT HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD CAME BY SPECIAL BUS TO BE ON HAND). FORMALITIES AND PROTOCOL WERE MINIMAL AND CROWDS MINGLED FREELY WITH FOREIGN AND LOCAL VIP'S ON TARMAC. SULTANS, GOVERNORS AND ELITE OF POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT, MANY OPENLY WEEPING, WERE IN ATTENDANCE, MOST DRESSED IN TRADITIONAL MALAY STYLE WITH WHITE "BAJUS" (LONG SHIRTS) AND TROUSERS AND BLACK "SONGKOK" (VELVET CAPS). HOME MINISTER GHAZALI SHAFIE WAS CONSPICUOUS, BOTH IN ATTIRE (BLACK SUIT AND TIE AND SONGKOK) AND COMMANDING PRESENCE AS HE MOVED ABOUT GIVING INSTRUCTIONS (HE SUPPOSEDLY IS CHARGED WITH ASPECTS RELATING TO FOREIGN VIP'S, ETC.). PARTICULARLY DRAMATIC POINT OCCURRED WHEN NEWLY SWORN IN PRIME MINISTER DATUK HUSSEIN ONN ARRIVED ON SCENE, ARM IN ARM WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN. RAZAK'S BODY SUBSEQUENTLY WAS TAKEN TO SRI TAMAN, PM'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE, WHERE IT REPOSED OVERNIGHT. THOSE COMING TO PAY RESPECTS AT SRI TAMAN INCLUDED YANG DIPERTUAN AGUNG (KING) AND OTHER MALAYSIAN VIP'S.

3. AS OF MID-MORNING JAN 16 CITY VERY SUBDUED WITH MOST BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS AND OFFICES CLOSED IN MOURNING. MALAYSIAN FLAGS AT HALF STAFF VISIBLE EVERYWHERE. LATE PM'S BODY HAS BEEN LYING IN STATE AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE SINCE 0600 HOURS, WITH HOURS OF 10 - 10:30 RESERVED FOR FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES, CABINET MINISTERS AND HEADS OF MISSION. BURIAL CEREMONY SCHEDULED BEGIN 1310 HOURS FOLLOWING FRIDAY PRAYERS. GOM HAS CANCELLED OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS THROUGH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JAN 20.

4. CONDOLENCE MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN LOCAL PRESS ITEMS, AS WAS INITIAL COMMENT ON RAZAK'S DEATH BY STATE DEPARTMENT, INCLUDING DIRECT QUOTES OF EXCERPTS. IN CONTRAST, JAN 16 "NEW STRAITS TIMES" NOTED RAZAK'S DEATH SUBJECT ONLY ONE LINE REPORTS

BY NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY AND TASS.

5. ACCORDING BERNAMA (MALAYSIAN NATIONAL WIRE SERVICE) REPORT FROM LONDON DATELINED JAN 15, UNIDENTIFIED SOURCE "CLOSE TO RAZAK" STATED RAZAK HAD SUFFERED FROM LEUKEMIA FOR SIX YEARS BUT HAD "KEPT IT A SECRET KNOWING THE INEVITABLE OUTCOME." SOURCE SAID ONLY OTHER PERSON TO KNOW WAS LATE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TUN DR. ISMAIL, IN WHOM RAZAK HAD CONFIDED. (COMMENT: WE ARE CONVINCED THAT MANY MALAYSIAN'S CLOSE TO RAZAK HERE WERE SHOCKED BY THE SUDDENNESS OF HIS DEATH AND DID NOT KNOW THE GRAVITY OF HIS ILLNESS; WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY ONE MFA OFFICIAL THAT EVEN DATUK HUSSEIN ONN DID NOT LEARN OF RAZAK'S TRUE CONDITION UNTIL SATURDAY (JAN 10).

6. ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SIDE, THE VISIBLE MANIFESTATIONS OF DISPARATE POLITICAL ELEMENTS COMING TOGETHER IN A TIME OF SORROW WERE MANY. THIS INCLUDED ANNOUNCEMENT BY MILITANT UMNO YOUTH WING THAT THEY ARE UNDIVIDED IN THEIR LOYALTY TO NEW PRIME MINISTER, AS WELL AS BY MEETING JAN 15 BETWEEN UMNO YOUTH DELEGATION HEADED BY THEIR CONTROVERSIAL LEADER, DATUK HARUN BIN IDRIS, AND HUSSEIN ONN. THIS UNITY HOWEVER MAY BE A SHORT-LIVED PHENOMEN, AS VARIOUS AMBITIOUS UMNO POLITICOS JOCKY FOR POSITION IN THE SUDDENLY FLUID SITUATION. UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL IS SCHEDULED TO MEET JAN 17 TO FORMALIZE DATUK HUSSEIN ONN'S ASSUMPTION OF PARTY PRESIDENCY AND UNDOUBTEDLY WILL TAKE UP THE QUESTION OF FILLING THE DEPUTY PM SLOT. IN THIS REGARD IT IS UNCLEAR HOW MUCH INFLUENCE HUSSEIN ONN WILL CHOOSE TO EXERCISE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RE THE APPOINTMENT OF HIS DEPUTY AND THE ROLE OF HARUN WILL BE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST. WITHOUT QUESTION HARUN HAS CONSIDERABLE DESTABILIZING POTENTIAL AND, AS EVIDENCED BY HIS DECISION RETURN FROM LEAVE TO POST OF CHIEF MINISTER OF SELANGOR (REFTEL) MAY BELIEVE THIS IS PROPITIOUS TIME FOR HIM TO RALLY HIS FORCES FOR MAJOR POWER PLAY WITHIN UMNO.

7. FYI: AS THIS MESSAGE BEING TYPED, NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY BERNAMA CARRIED DENIAL BY ACTING CHIEF MINISTER OF SELANGOR HORMAT BIN RAFAI OF ANY KNOWLEDGE SULTAN OF SELANGOR HAD AUTHORIZED DATUK HARUN IDRIS TO RESUME CHIEF MINISTERSHIP. IN FACT, HORMAT REPORTEDLY STATED, HE RECEIVED CABLE FROM

SULTAN (WHO IS IN LONDON) LAST NIGHT SPECIFICALLY
DIRECTING HIM TO CARRY ON AS ACTING CHIEF
MINISTER. IF REPORT CORRECT, HARUN'S ATTEMPT TO USE
RAZAK'S DEATH TO REINSTATE HIMSELF SEEMS TO HAVE
FAILED. END FYI.
UNDERHILL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, PRESS COMMENTS, DEATHS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, CONDOLENCE MESSAGES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976KUALA00291
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760016-0588
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760150/aaaabsmv.tel
Line Count: 175
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 KUALA LUMPUR 281
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JAN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 JAN 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <23 APR 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEATH OF PRIME MINISTER RAZAK: LOCAL ATMOSPHERICS
TAGS: OVIP, PGOV, PFOR, MY, US, (RAZAK, TUN ABDUL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006